

Common Lane, Polesworth, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1331
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Common Lane, Polesworth

Commissioned by: Jayne & Derek Mulvey

Project Report No. 1331

Site Code: PC13

NGR: SK 2625 0198

Planning Reference: PAP/2008/0044

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Contents

| | |
|---|--|
| | Summary |
| 1 | Introduction |
| 2 | Location |
| 3 | Methodology |
| 4 | Archaeological and Historical Background |
| 5 | Trial Trenching |
| 6 | Conclusions |
| | Acknowledgements |
| | Bibliography |

Appendix

| | |
|---|------------------|
| A | List of contexts |
|---|------------------|

Figures

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Site location |
| 2 | Detail from the Polesworth Tithe map of 1850 (WRO CR 328/37/2) |
| 3 | Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 |
| 4 | Detail from Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1903 |
| 5 | Trench location |
| 6 | Trench 1 and sections A and B |
| 7 | Evaluation trench looking north-east |
| 8 | Sections through ditch 3 and posthole 5 |

Summary

An archaeological evaluation undertaken to the rear of 8 Potters Lane Polesworth, fronting onto Common Lane, in advance of development, recorded an undated pit, ditch and posthole. The pit is likely to be post-medieval as it was cut from a high level. The ditch may be a boundary feature of medieval or post-medieval date. The single posthole is probably modern. Only two sherds of 19th century pottery were recovered and no evidence for the nearby post-medieval pottery industry was found.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by the North Warwickshire Borough Council for the erection of a house on land at 8 Potters Lane, Polesworth, Tamworth, B78 1HE (PAP/2008/0044). The Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist, Anna Stocks, in her capacity as archaeological advisor to the Planning Authority, had advised that the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential.

1.2 It was therefore a condition of the planning permission that, before the development commences, the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which had been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.

1.3 A Brief for a first phase of evaluation was prepared in April 2013.

1.4 Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Planning Archaeologist. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code PC13.

2 Location

2.1 The site is centred on map reference SP 3261 9387 on sloping high ground on the edge of the valley of the River Anker which wends its way north to south some 1.5km to the east. The underlying geology is Stockingford Shale although the site is close to the boundary between this and Alluvium (BGS 1953).

3 Methodology

3.1 The principal aim of the project was to determine the presence or not of significant archaeological remains and assess the extent of any risk of damage or destruction from the proposed development on the site. Secondary objectives include communicating the results to appropriate local and regional audiences in an accessible format.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. The fieldwork undertaken consisted of a programme of trial trenching,

undertaken in accordance with Archaeology Warwickshire's Procedures Manual, the Codes and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists and the WCC Planning Archaeologists brief (dated April 2013).

3.3 A single trench measuring 10m in length and 1.6m in width was excavated using a JCB type machine with a toothless ditching bucket.

3.4 A photographic record of the excavation was produced. It contained monochrome prints as well as colour digital images of the individual trenches.

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area is a barbed and tanged arrowhead found to the west of Market Street (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 221).

4.2 The proposed development site lies within the probable extent of medieval Polesworth (MWA 9573). A medieval tile kiln is recorded in Potters Lane although the exact location is unknown (MWA 276). The tiles produced were glazed and patterned in a variety of ways. A series of tile wasters in Polesworth Church were recovered from Potters Lane confirming the presence of a kiln in the vicinity, and a cottage in Potters Lane was once known as Potters House (Chatwin 1936, 18-19).

4.3 Fairfield's Hill, is the site of a 17th-century timber-framed house, now demolished (MWA 2473). In Potters Lane the production of tiles was followed by the production of pottery in the 17th and 18th centuries (MWA 5705) and clay tobacco pipes (MWA 6117). The remains of these clay tobacco pipe kilns were removed in the early part of the 20th century (Chatwin 1936, 19). It has been suggested that the kiln site was at 22 Potters Lane; the current owner of this property has noticed burn marks on a wall and the presence of a spring in the garden, which could be associated with a kiln (Albrighton pers. comm.). Investigations in the back gardens of the houses in Potters Lane in the mid-1980s produced a kiln bob or pot spacer and a slipware dish decorated with 'Polesworth RG 1801'.

4.4 In 1986 excavation for a house foundation to the east of Potters Lane (behind the Public House at the corner of Grendon Road) revealed a post-medieval pottery waster dump in what was thought to be an old clay pit (MWA 8128, EWA 1; Scott 1987, 289; Melton and Scott 1999, 98). Quantities of ash and coal found in the pit suggest the kiln was coal fired, which indicates that it would have been a circular, multi-flued structure, probably built of brick. Kiln bricks, kiln bobs, saggars and burnt clay also attest the presence of a kiln. Documentary sources suggest that the Polesworth pottery industry was probably in existence by the late 17th century; there are records of Sir Richard Newdegate of Arbury Hall ordering pottery from Polesworth, probably horticultural wares, in 1688 (Melton and Scott 1999, 97). The industry continued into the early 19th century but may well have been finished by the middle of the 19th century when the Tithe map (WRO CR 328/37/2) was drawn up, as no kiln is indicated here. Most of the pottery waste from the excavation appeared to be 18th century in date with horticultural wares, blackwares, slipwares and yellow wares making up the assemblage. A cistern was also found with the inscription 'Polesworth Pottery May 1...' confirming the name of the post-medieval industry. Observation at the east end of Potters Lane during trenching for water mains renewal revealed large quantities of pottery, mostly

18th century in date (Warwickshire Museum 1999; MWA 8749, EWA 6748). Some saggars were also recovered, along with over-fired pottery and wasters, suggesting this material derived from the post-medieval pottery kilns in the immediate vicinity.

4.5 The opening of the Coventry Canal (MWA 4373) and turnpike roads in the 18th century (e.g. MWA 4801) meant that the main focus of Polesworth shifted from the historic centre north of the river southwards, closer to the pottery producing area of Potters Lane. Adjacent to the canal, is the site of a steam mill which was built in 1872 for grain milling and closed in 1910 (MWA 218). Steam Mill Bridge, to the north, takes its name from it. A Baptist Chapel on Gullet Lane, built by 1885 (MWA 2454) and a later 19th-century shop called 'Polesworth Market' also lie to the north-west (MWA 2474). The majority of Potters Lane was not built up until the 20th century (mainly in 1915 and the 1930s), although the tithe apportionment map of 1850 and the Ordnance Survey map of 1885 show a number of buildings at its east end.

4.6 Archaeological observation of topsoil stripping at the west end of Potters Lane in 1997 revealed no archaeological features, and no finds of pre 19th-century date were found (Warwickshire Museum 1997).

4.7 Archaeological observation during groundworks for a new house at the rear of 21 Potters Lane revealed a number of sherds of 19th/20th century pottery, including a sherd of black-glazed coarseware, and two clay pipe fragments. It is possible that the black-glazed pottery and clay pipes were locally produced. There was, however, no evidence for a kiln in the vicinity. No medieval or post-medieval features were found (Coutts and Rann 2008).

5 Trial Trench

5.1 The single trench was 10m long and 1.6m wide. Geological natural (10) consisted of gravel in a strong brown clayey sand soil matrix and was exposed at a depth of 71.19m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The natural was cut by three features; a large pit (7), a ditch (3), and a posthole (5).

5.2 The earliest feature was the ditch (3). This was only partially exposed at the south-west end of the trench and ran in a north-west to south-east direction. A maximum width of 1.2m was exposed and the ditch was a maximum depth of 0.30m with a gently sloping east side and flat base. It contained two fills, the lower (9) being a strong brown sandy loam, up to 0.08m deep, and the upper fill (4) being a yellowish brown clay loam with frequent small pebbles. No dating evidence was found within this feature. The fills of this ditch were cut by a small posthole (5) which was 0.24m in diameter and up to 0.15m deep. It was filled by a very dark grey silty clay loam (6).

5.3 The ditch and posthole were covered by a layer of yellowish brown sandy clay loam (2) which varied in depth from 0.30m to 0.36m. This was cut by a large pit (7), which was partially exposed at the north-east end of the trench. This pit was up to 0.83m deep and was over 5.5m in diameter. It was filled by a mixture of yellowish brown clay and grey clay (8) which included some fragments of coal.

5.4 Above the pit fill (8) and layer 2 was between 0.3 and 0.4m of dark grey clay loam topsoil (1) which contained fragments of modern rubbish including brick, tile, metal and concrete. Two sherds of 19th century pottery (discarded) were found within this layer.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The archaeological deposits exposed on the site consisted of a ditch, pit and posthole. All unfortunately remain undated as no finds were recovered from them. The large pit (7) was the latest feature as it had been cut from relatively high up. However, it does not appear to have been associated with the nearby pottery industry as the geological natural it was dug into was a form of sand and gravel rather than the clay which the potters would have required. The ditch (3) may well represent a boundary feature and does run parallel to this part of Common Lane. It too was undated but perhaps is most likely to be post-medieval in origin. The small posthole (5) does not have to be of any great age as it could have been cut from high up, its position in the middle of the trench making this impossible to determine. Only two sherds of pottery were recovered, both 19th century in date and both from the topsoil. These were not of any great archaeological significance. There appeared to be no evidence for the post-medieval pottery industry within the development area.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

A List of Contexts

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Dark grey clay loam |
| 2 | Yellowish brown clay loam |
| 3 | Ditch |
| 4 | Ditch fill (upper) |
| 5 | Posthole |
| 6 | Posthole fill |
| 7 | Pit |
| 8 | Pit fill |
| 9 | Ditch fill (lower) |
| 10 | Geological natural |

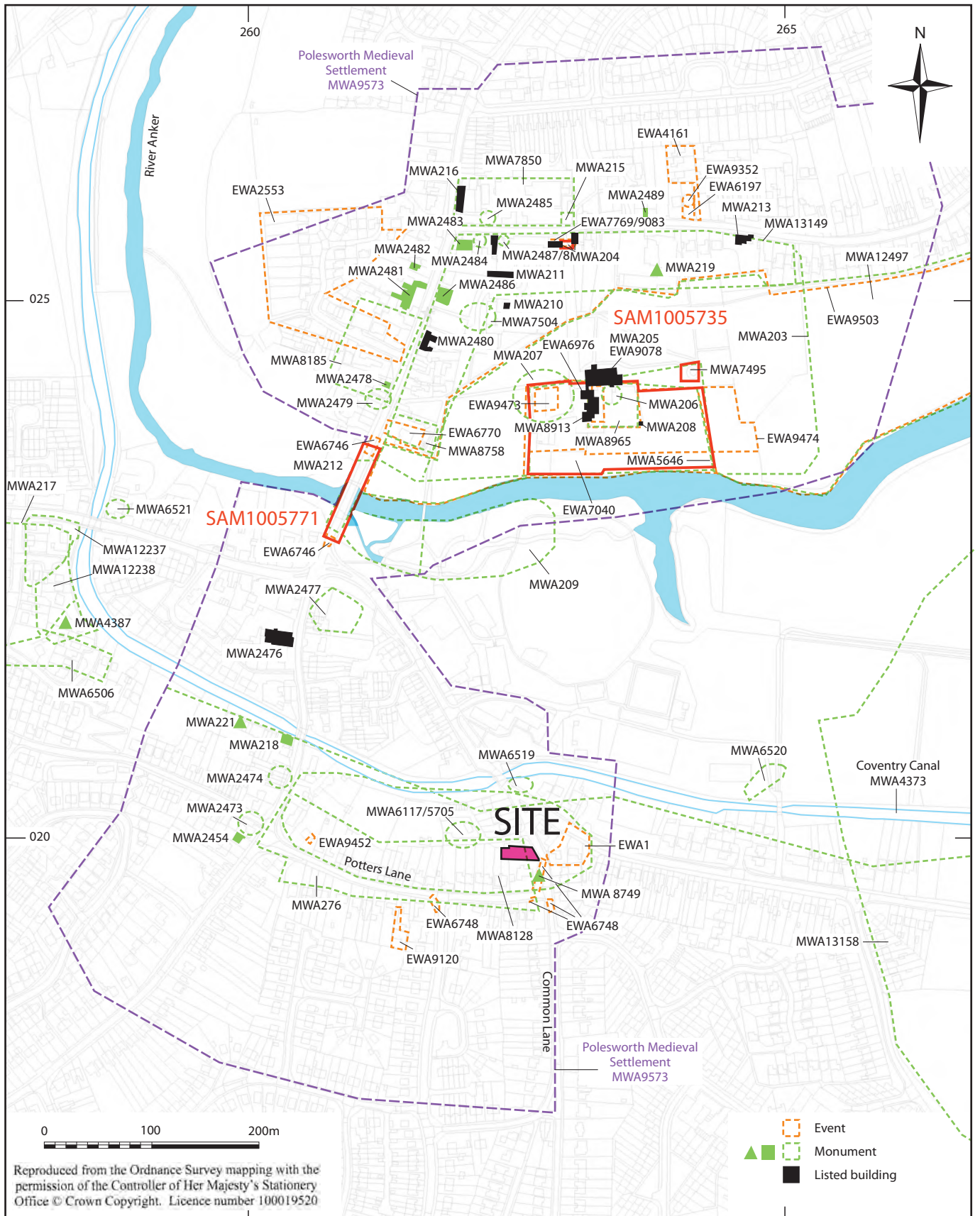


Fig 1: Site location

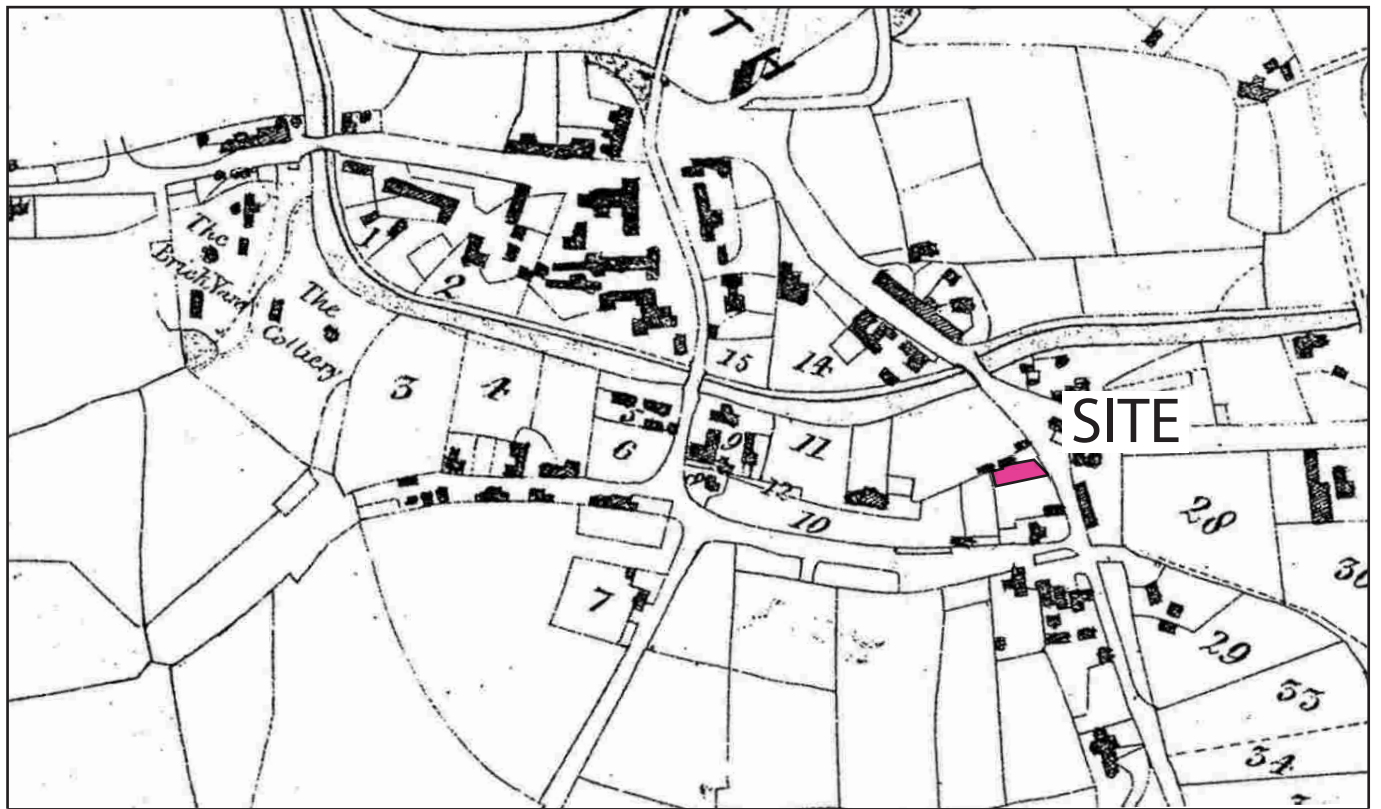


Fig 2 : Detail from the Polesworth Tithe map of 1850 (WRO CR 328/37/2)

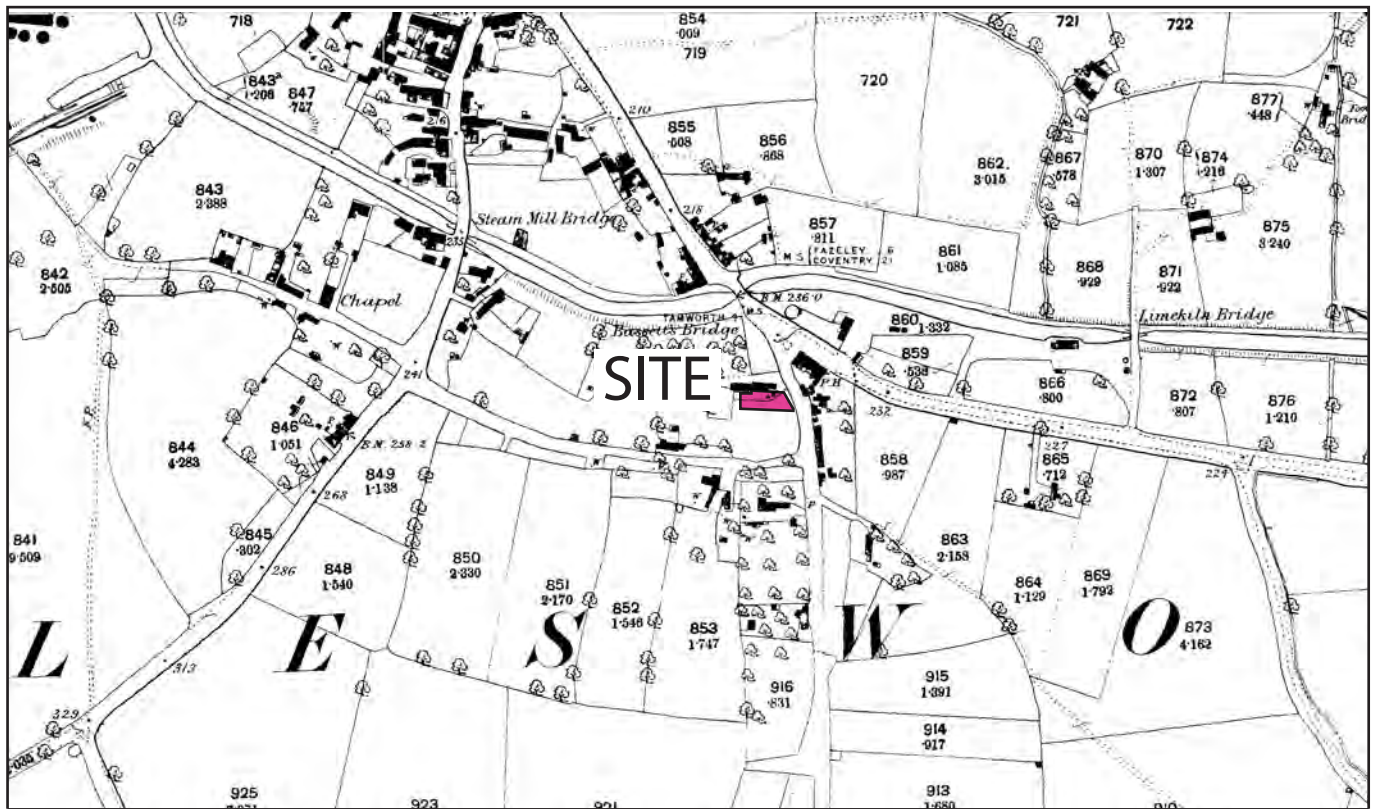


Fig 3: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885

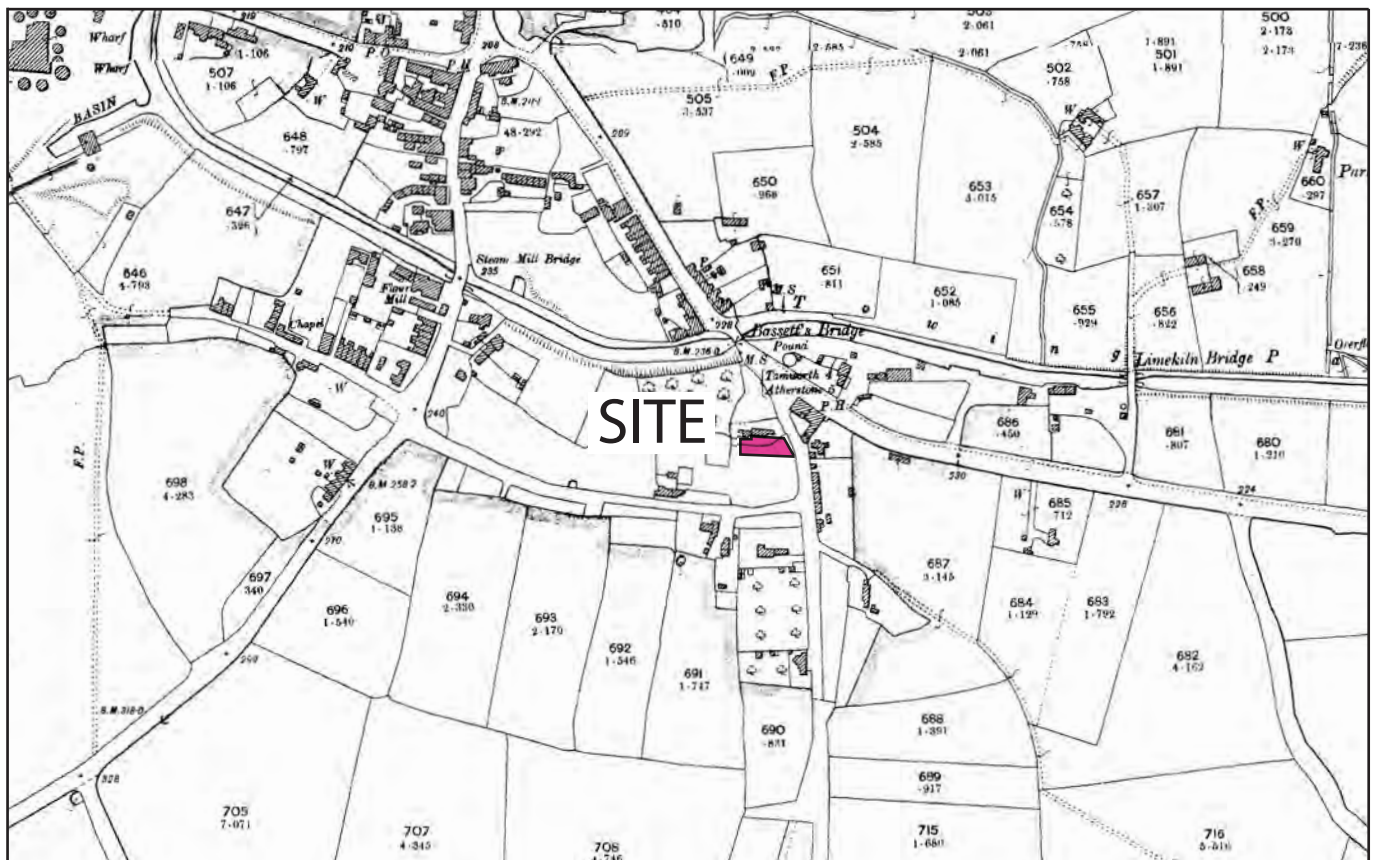


Fig 4: Detail from Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1903

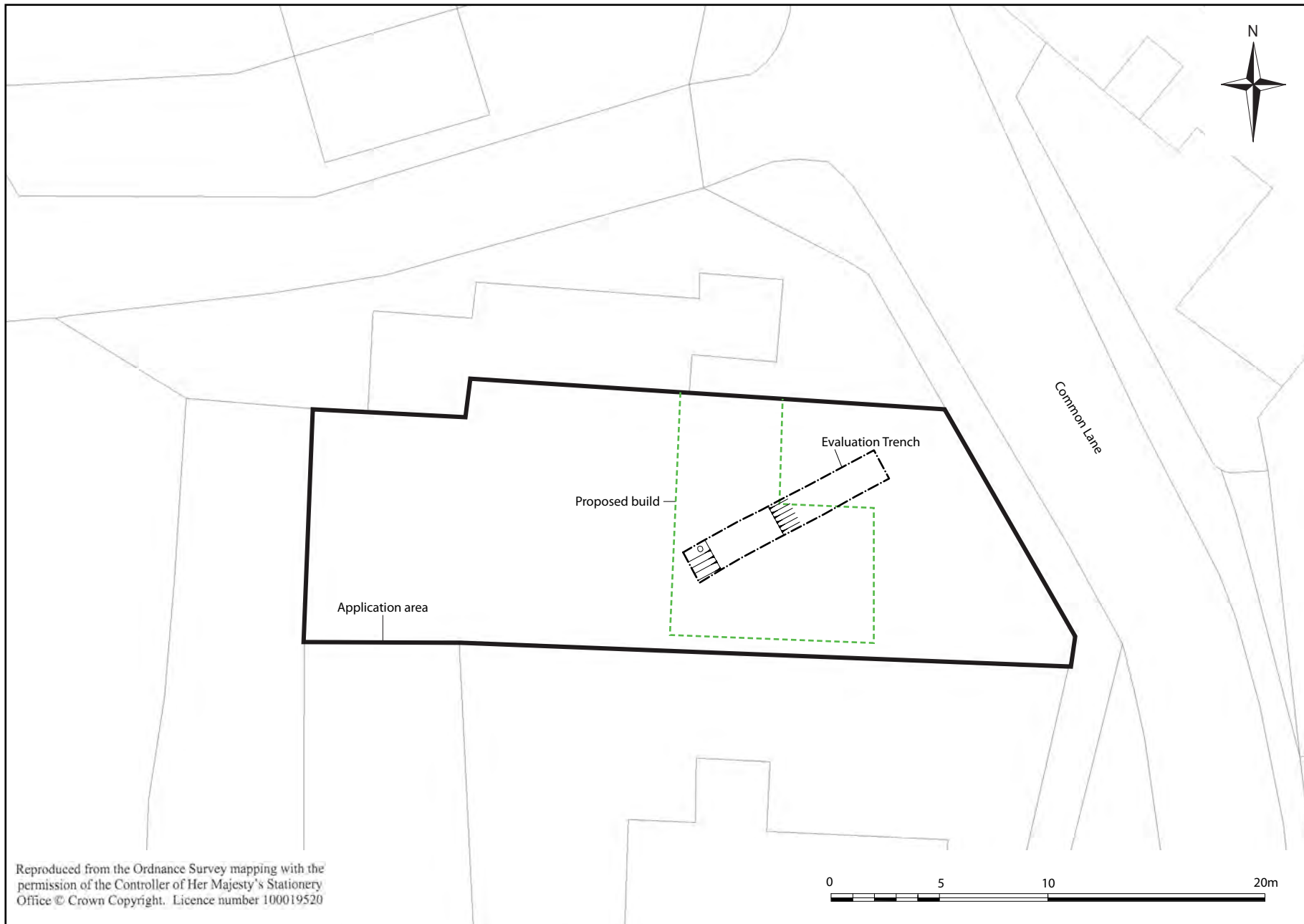


Fig 5: Trench location

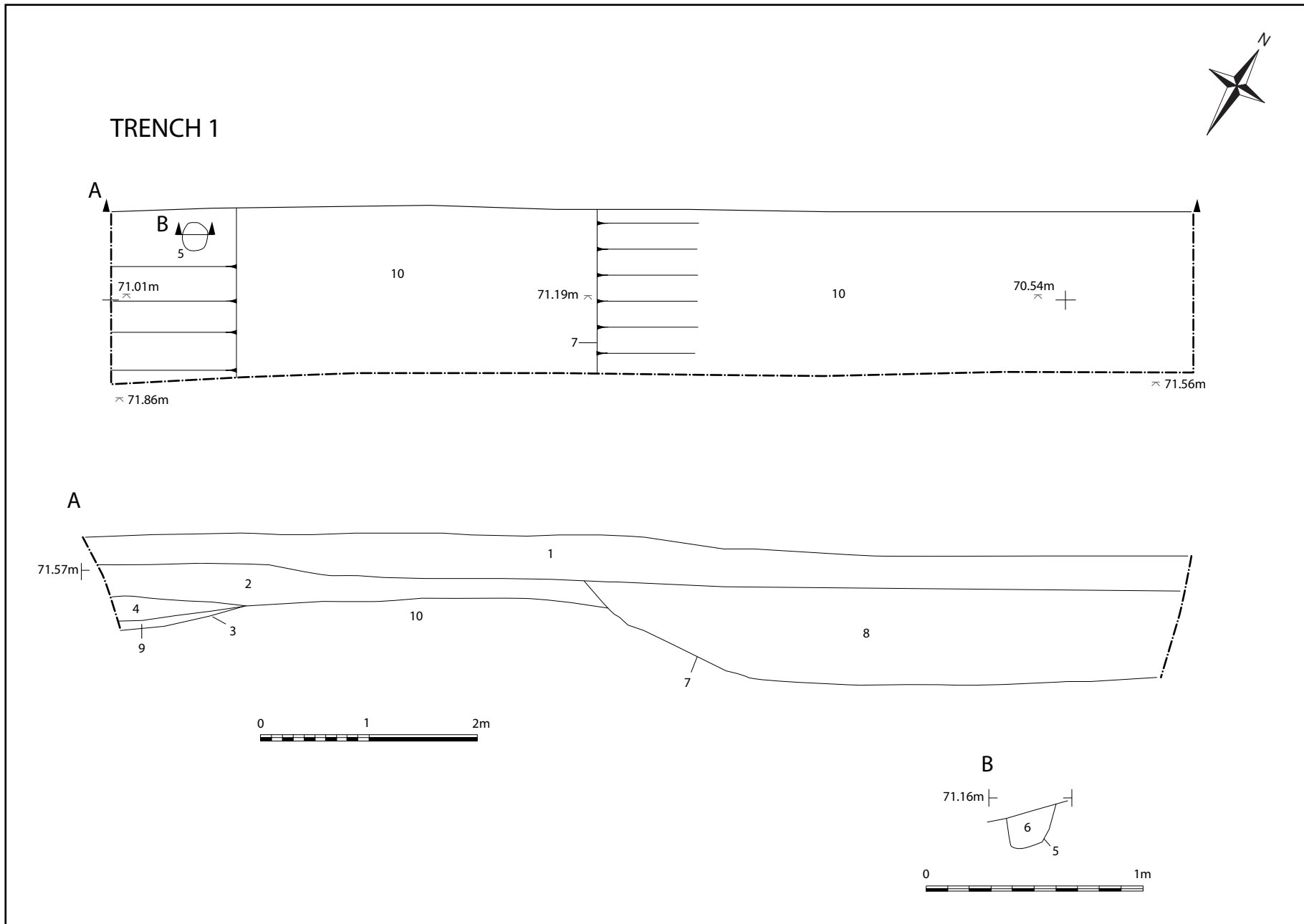


Fig 6: Trench 1 and sections A and B



Fig 7: Evaluation trench looking north-east



Fig 8: Sections through ditch 3 and posthole 5